



## Night of Thunder

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*NEW YORK TIMES* BESTSELLING AUTHOR STEPHEN HUNTER RETURNS WITH HIS MOST RIVETING BOB LEE SWAGGER VOLUME TO DATE.

Talk about a ride!

Woe unto he who crosses Bob Lee Swagger, especially when his daughter's life is at stake. Forced off the road and into a crash that leaves her in a coma, clinging to life, reporter Nikki Swagger had begun to peel back the onion of a Southernfried conspiracy bubbling with all the angst, resentment, and dysfunction that Dixie gangsters can muster. An ancient, violent crime clan, a possibly corrupt law enforcement structure, gunmen of all stripes and shapes, and deranged evangelicals rear their ugly heads and will live to rue the day they targeted the wrong man's daughter. It's what you call your big-time bad career move. All of it is set against the backdrop of excitement and insanity that only a weeklong NASCAR event can bring to the backwoods of a town as seemingly sleepy as Bristol, Tennessee.

A master at the top of his game, Hunter provides a host of thrilling new reasons to read as fast as we can. When Swagger picks up peeling where his daughter left off, and his swift sword of justice is let loose, we find a true American hero in his most stunning action to date. And -- in the form of Brother Richard, a self-decreed "Sinnerman" out of the old fire-and-brimstone tradition -- Hunter offers up his most diabolical, engaging villain yet. A triumph of story, character, and style, *Night of Thunder* is Stephen Hunter at his very best.

## Night of Thunder Details

Date : Published (first published September 23rd 2008)

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Author : Stephen Hunter

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# From Reader Review Night of Thunder for online ebook

## Nate says

Dear Stephen Hunter,

I understand that it probably gets boring writing the same kind of story over and over again, but sometimes it ain't broke and you don't need to fix it.

This is how you *really* Shake It Up: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rAEVg...>

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## Mike (the Paladin) says

Well, if I went 4 stars on 47th Samurai I have to go at least that here. I (like others here) often bemoan the limited range of our 5 star system. I like these books, like all of them that I've read (it seems I missed one and will have to go back and pick up Time To Hunt, oops.) I don't however think that so far one is a 5 star read. The first was close (based on enjoyment and interest factors) but not quite. The 47th Samurai I found...not quite as good. I suppose it would be on the lower edge of the 4 star range while Point Of Impact would be at the top.

Here we have an enjoyable book. It hits the notes of the action adventure squarely and also give a pretty accurate view of one of America's signature activities, NASCAR...the Bristol 500. Stephen Hunter usually does a pretty good job of showing the reality of the poor working southerner vs. the popular view of said poor working southerner. While they get called things like "trailer trash" they also end up making the best soldiers, cops and hardest workers. Interesting.

In this book Stephen Hunter moves Boob Lee Swagger into my neck of the woods. The action is placed in Bristol TN/VA (the city rests on the state line. There was (and may still be) a place where the "dry" (you can't buy alcoholic beverages) Virginia was on one side of the street and "wet" (you can buy alcoholic beverages) Tennessee was on the other. You could cross the street and buy a drink. Bristol is one of three cities in Tennessee that are called "the Tri-Cities". These are Bristol, Johnson City and Kingsport. I grew up on a small farm about halfway between Johnson City and Kingsport. Our farm faced a dirt road. We went into Kingsport every few weeks and north across the state line into Virginia fairly often to visit both sets of grandparents. My family calls that part of the country (where TN, VA and KY meet) home.

So the picture SH paints of the flow of fans coming to the race is real. A few years ago my father passed away. I now live in Nashville and drove to Morristown where my dad and his wife lived. Morristown is around 41 miles from Knoxville. Knoxville is over a hundred miles from Bristol (my dad's grave plot was between Kingsport and Bristol and we "proccessioned" there after the funeral in Morristown). There was not a motel room available anywhere with that hundred mile circle around Bristol. It was race weekend.

The picture Mr. Hunter paints of the thrill and excitement around the Bristol 500 is a very accurate picture.

The excitement of the race weekend and all that surrounds it adds to what Boob ends up facing here, a 60+ year old man who everyone sees and fails to realize that he's also the consummate soldier, sniper, warrior.

This book opens with someone making an attempt on the life of Bob Lee's daughter...bad move. The "bad people" who might have made it, they might have prospered...but they tried to kill Bob Lee Swagger's oldest daughter. Ouch.

We're back on more home ground for Bob Lee here (no more samurai swords) and while a couple of Mr. Hunter's failings still show up a bit the book is well worth a read. If you're an action adventure reader, if you like to open a book and have the smell of burning cordite waft up from the pages this is one I think you'll like.

So...what failings I can hear you asking. Nothing big, sometimes he has a tendency to lead us up to an action sequence and then just as he triggers the action, something like, "and the gun fired", he'll drop back a few hours and tell us how the other party got to that spot. Thus we get another long lead up to the same action scene.

Also now and again he'll break up an action scene with a long almost flowery description. As action is taking place we get told how whatever it is moves and how the perspective changes or seems to go into slow motion. It sometimes gets a bit long and slows the scene a bit.

Still neither of these is a horrible flaw and they don't take away from the book, only frustrate a little when you're caught up in the action. LOL

Good book, recommended...enjoy.

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## **Mike says**

What goes well with a NASCAR 500 mile race, you ask? Why, Stephen Hunter figured it out just fine. You need a big ole gun fight with a brigade of real nasty bad guys and just one good guy, if that good guy is Bob Lee Swagger. You see, these big old bad guys think they are Big Jim "Walker" Grumleys. But they musta not listened to the whole song on the radio when Jim Croce came on, cause they missed the unplugged version's last chorus:

"You don't tug on Superman's cape  
You don't spit into the wind  
You don't pull the mask off that old Lone Ranger  
And you don't mess around with Slim"

Seldom heard last chorus:

"You don't fuck with Bob Lee Swagger  
You don't even look at him  
You especially don't threaten his daughter  
'Cause the result will be right grim"

Bob Lee is getting on in age, he is a shot-up, beat-up, cut-up and bruised 63 hard years but he still has a trick or two. Or in his words: "I am Bob Lee Swagger, Gunnery Sergeant, USMC, eighty-seven kills, third-ranking marine sniper in Vietnam. I have shot it out with Salvadorian hunter-killer units and Marisol Cubano hit men and a Russian sniper sent halfway around the world. I even won a sword fight or two in my time.

They all had one thing in common. They thought they were hunting me, and I was hunting them. Faced many, all are sucking grass from the bitter, root end. Here're your choices: You can come easy or you can come dead."

I think the NRA should give Stephen Hunter some special recognition award because every time I read one of his books, I want to cash in some savings and go buy me a bunch of guns and ammo. Hunter has a way with describing guns and associated equipment that is just so cool: "The handgun was a .38 Super, his own 1911 model Kimber, a very nice gun that as he got older he appreciated more for its lack of recoil and muzzle flip in fast strings, while completely identical to the .45 in handling and operating procedures. The extra boxes indicated the load Meachum had chosen was the CorBon 130-grain jacketed hollow point +P+ ammo. His Kydex holster lay beside the case, amid the ammo boxes."

Read this book and enjoy, it is another fantastic "Bob the Nailer" tale written in blood, sweat, tears and a fair amount of lead.

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### **James Wirrell says**

Despite several worthy criticisms, I must say that I really enjoyed this book. Yes, there were a lot of unbelievable sequences in the book, yes, the villains were campy and silly, and, yes, some of Hunter's scene build up was a bit long. But nothing beats Bob Lee Swagger going into action. And I really enjoyed how an aging Bob Lee was able to stay whip smart, alert and vigilant while being constantly underestimated as just an old guy. This book, like the previous one in the series (and I assume the later ones also) are now stand alone novels and not part of the earlier inter-connected series of Earl and Bob Lee Swagger. Overall though, I heartily recommend this book for a very fun thriller.

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### **Prognomore LAFIANZA says**

Shorter than some, Bob Lee has fewer resources than usual to face the unthinkable, an attack on his daughter Nikki, now girl reporter in a meth and NASCAR-soaked southern community, in all its closed-group greatness.

"Cám ?n cô em. Cô th?t gan d? và s? can ??m c?a cô ?ã c?u sinh m?ng chúng tôi. "

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### **Maddy says**

RATING: 3.25

Bob Lee Swagger, former Marine sniper in Vietnam, is now in his mid 60s. You could almost believe that he is becoming domesticated, in that he has a happy home life with his wife Julie, their young daughter, Miko, and a successful adult daughter, Nikki. Nikki Swagger is a beginning journalist; currently, she is working on a series of articles about methamphetamine trade in the Virginia/Tennessee area. She's just completed an interview when she is pursued on a treacherous mountain road by some kind of lunatic. It's only thanks to her skillful driving that she is able to avoid being catapulted off the road; there's also a bit of luck involved when

the driver finally does hit her and her vehicle doesn't roll over. A situation that should have resulted in instant death leaves Nikki in a coma instead. The investigators believe that she was the victim of a joyriding teenager; however, Bob wonders if someone with a grudge against him has targeted his daughter.

Bob immediately leaves his ranch in Idaho to see what happened. He finds himself in the middle of an area preparing for a major NASCAR event. As he follows the wispy path behind Nikki's accident, he begins to believe that Nikki's investigative reporting may have unsettled some folks who wanted to shut her down permanently. It isn't long before the investigation leads him to the Grumley family, whose patriarch, Reverend Alton Grumley, has spread his seed throughout the land, having seven wives and various other liaisons that have produced a plethora of Grumleys. The various members of the family operate almost like a mob family; they are known for doing whatever needs to be done, without remorse or question. The more intelligent members of the clan are shunted off outside the community; the ones that remain are vicious, stupid and inordinately loyal to their leader. What Bob doesn't immediately know is that they are involved in a very nefarious plot to rob the NASCAR event of its proceeds.

The conclusion of the book is an action-packed view of how the Grumleys and the driver that targeted Nikki, "Sinnerman", hijack the event proceeds and prepare a bold getaway. Of course, Bob is able to thwart them. There are a couple of well-done twists that reveal the surprising head of the operation. As is often the case in the Bob Lee Swagger books, Bob appears to be the hunted but in reality is the hunter.

A few things don't quite work, beginning with Nikki's accident as the book opens. She is driving against a man who is a true expert driver and almost outsmarts him. I wondered where she had gotten these skills, why she didn't react in the normal ways that most people would when facing such a threat. Secondly, the dialogue in the book is quite formal and Swagger is almost courtly. It was an odd contrast to the testosterone fueled story. There were a few other male characters who talked in almost the same fashion as he did, which made it difficult to distinguish one from another. The plot is a bit farfetched and the characters not very developed and even over the top.

NIGHT OF THUNDER has lots of action for the thriller junkie, and the depiction of the NASCAR experience is very well done. If you mostly want excitement from your reading, then you'll enjoy this book.

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## Jeffrey says

One of the problems that I have with thrillers of a certain vintage of long term authors is that we know that the main character is not going to die. SO you need to suspend your basic disbelief. This is not to say that authors do not kill off major characters -- wives being the most useful apparently.

In this latest thriller from Stephen Hunter, Bob Lee Swagger's daughter is injured in traffic hit and run while investigating the meth trade. Swagger, a sniper and ex Marine, and a fighter without compare, investigates his daughter's accident and discovers that it was no accident. He then sets out to figure out why his daughter was targeted. In this tight thriller, Swagger uses a local computer geek to find out information from his daughter's computer and while dodging members of the criminal family of an oversexed preacher named Grumley strives to solve the mystery and bring those responsible to justice. A one man hit squad, even in his 60's, Bob Lee Swagger is more than up for the task.

Hunter does not let us know forget Swagger's age, but if 60 is the new 40, then Swagger is still the same old killer and since we know it cannot be his time, some of the tension in the story is lessened, but despite this inherent issue in these type of thrillers, this taut book still moves along swiftly.

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### **Quinn says**

Although this book had some slightly surprising twists in the end and the action sequences were terrific they were far and in between. The first three quarters of the book dragged a lot and I had a hard time reading them. The book does get better towards the last quarter of the book so I would still recommend reading it. After reading several of Stephen Hunters novels I like the ones with Earl Swagger far better. I have a hard time buying into the Bob Lee Swagger character and to me he seems phony. Maybe it's because I have seen the movie "Shooter" and all I can see is Marky Mark Wahlberg.

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### **Benjamin Thomas says**

A Bob Lee Swagger novel by Pulitzer Prize winner Stephen Hunter is always a good time and this fifth book in the series is no exception. Former USMC sniper, Bob Lee Swagger just wants to be left in peace to live the good life with his family but when his eldest daughter (now a budding journalist) is run off the road and is put into a coma, Bob is worried there might be somebody from his past wanting to do him or his family harm.

His adventure takes him to the world of NASCAR at Bristol Speedway in Tennessee and the surrounding areas. A truly remarkable family is introduced, a family that breeds criminals, thugs really, designed to be their own mafia and commit various major crimes throughout the area. Of course, when Bob Lee Swagger's daughter is threatened, you can be sure there will be plenty of gunplay to come.

This novel is not of the same high quality as the earlier novels like Point of Impact or Dirty White Boys or Hot Springs but the author seems to enjoy writing them and that makes them fun for the reader as well.

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### **Ed says**

Bob Lee Swagger comes to the NASCAR race in Bristol, TN after his daughter nearly dies from her car shoved off the road. Meth superlab, souped up cars, guns galore, and detective sleuthing are rolled up into one gritty story.

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### **Bill says**

Not the best Bob Lee book, but an enjoyable read.

If you are new to Stephen Hunter, do yourself a favor and read some of his other books (Point of Impact, Hot Springs, etc) first.

If you love all things Swagger, you will enjoy this book.

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### **DJMikeG says**

2.5 Stars. A fun read, but definitely a serious step down in quality from Hunter's other Swagger novels. I hate NASCAR, so I'm a little biased against this book from the get-go. In his afterword, Hunter marvels at the Bristol Speedway because it shows "man's limitless imagination", really, Hunter? So a bunch of fucking cars drive around in a circle, that's really the enormity of our imagination? Beg to differ, man. Regardless, once the story kicks into high gear, it's pretty fun. I thought the whole Grumley clan thing was a tad overwrought. It felt like Hunter was going for camp or something which didn't work and made for some bad dialog. Also, the ending sucks on a few different levels. Swagger shoots down the bad guy's chopper and somehow they all live? After it's been described that MK 211 round would destroy everyone inside the chopper, and the chopper plummets in a ball of flame and yet, the main bad guys live? Bullshit. And how does Sinnerman not see the Dodge Charger in front of Swagger's mini van as he tails him through windy mountain roads? Hunter is a great author, and the Swagger books kick serious ass, except for this one. Seems like Hunter got back on track with "I, Sniper", so I'm looking forward to reading that one.

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### **William says**

Our main character, Bob Lee Swagger, has done it all: fought samurai, other master snipers, and a variety of hitmen. So what is left? "Night of Thunder" offers up a group of backwoods hillbilly's, a corrupt deputy, and a hitman that kills people by running them off the road with the stolen car of his choice. Shouldn't be a problem for Bob the Nailer, and it isn't. It is too damn easy, and that is why the action seems boring and irrelevant. There are couple of quick shoot outs (because Bob is so good), and a final, but brief quick draw with the main baddie. Night of Thunder lacks any thunder whatsoever, and I, for one, am truly disappointed. I hope Hunter's next endeavor reads more like Point of Origin (his first book starring Bob Lee Swagger) than this poor attempt at riveting action.

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### **Dav says**

"...former Marine sniper Bob Lee Swagger deep into the heart of NASCAR country in this action-packed thriller.

...his daughter's life is at stake. Forced off the road and into a crash that leaves her in a coma, clinging to life, reporter Nikki Swagger had begun to peel back the onion of a Southern-fried-conspiracy bubbling with all the angst, resentment, and dysfunction that Dixie gangsters can muster... All of it is set against the backdrop of...a weeklong NASCAR event..."

Mostly well written with minor enigmatic details, but has some blatant mockery of Christianity.

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### **Jim Coughenour says**

I wouldn't say that Stephen Hunter has lost his edge, only that he's indulging himself. His new Bob Lee

Swagger book isn't a patch on the old ones – *Dirty White Boys*; *Point of Impact*; *Black Light*; *Hot Springs*; *etc.* The previous one – *The 47th Samurai* – was evidently inspired by his interest in Samurais, and in the acknowledgements to *Night of Thunder* he confesses that this one was engendered by NASCAR. Hunter's got a Pulitzer prize, he can write whatever he wants but this book is a dud.

Even worse is that Old Sniper Swagger is now a limping mass of clichés. In a sigh-inducing passage, one of his admirers remarks "You have what they have for sure, and it isn't luck... Arkansas boy like you ought to know the term for it. 'True Grit' ring a bell? If not, try Japanese: 'Samurai.' Sound familiar? You were there. Marine Corps. 'The Old Breed.' Bet you heard that one. Or go back to the ancient Greeks: 'Spartan.' Any of them mean a thing?"

This isn't writing, it's a comic with captions.

Hunter's written a small shelf of white hot thrillers, and if you're in the mood for vicarious righteous kick-ass, grab one of the early ones. *Night of Thunder* will keep you warm too, even if you have to toss it on the fire when you're finished.

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